

The Southeastern Pennsylvania projects were undertaken by HABS project leaders Robert Arzola (architect) and Catherine Lavoie (historian), working under the direction of the Chief of HABS Paul Dolinsky. Project selection was coordinated by Historian Bill Bolger of the Chesapeake Systems Support Office (CHESO). The documentation of the Church of St. James the Less was made possible with financial assistance by the William Penn Foundation on behalf of the church. The documentation of the National Memorial Arch was sponsored by the Rite Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania, Edward O. Weisser, Grand Master.

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### *The Alabama Theater*

The Historic American Buildings Survey undertook documentation of the Alabama Theater. Designed by Chicago architects Graven & Mayger, the Alabama was erected in 1927 by Paramount's Publix Theater chain as its flagship for the southeastern region of the United States. The theater is a prime example of the elaborate, even whimsical mix of revival architectural styles which characterize the great movie palaces built during the pre-Depression heyday. In the succeeding decades, theater design would be inspired by the technology that drove the burgeoning film industry, taking the form of the streamlined Art Deco and Moderne styles. The Alabama is a composition of Spanish Renaissance and Baroque architectural styles, but includes decorative elements ranging from Egyptian-patterned doorway surrounds and Japanese dragons, to Celtic Coats of Arms and Colonial Revival elliptical domes. In no other type structure can one expect to find so successfully displayed a total lack of regard for continuity of design! Although the decorative elements reflect styles from past centuries, they are merely a mask for the modern steel structural system which holds it all together. The 3,000 seat theater was built to accommodate both movies—accompanied by the still intact “mighty” Wurlitzer Organ—and live theater on the Broadway circuit.

Because the architect's original plan, sectional and detail drawings still exist, HABS produced axonometric (three-dimensional) drawings which illustrate how the theater works. For as much area as the public spaces command—two lobbies, auditorium, mezzanine, balcony, lounges, and enumerable halls and stairways—even more area is needed for the behind-the-scenes operations. Axonometrics were produced to illustrate such aspects of the theater's operations as the stage and grid system, the duct work for the heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems, and the multi-layered seating arrangements and sightlines. The historical report focuses on the context of the nationwide development of movie palaces, and discusses its design and

operations in terms relevant to the philosophy of theater design of that era. Large-format photography will serve as the principle means for documenting the incredible volume of ornamental detail seen throughout the theater. Once the crown jewel of an expansive Birmingham theater district, the Alabama is now the only remaining, active theater. The documentation of theaters such as the Alabama thus becomes even more important when considering the great numbers that have been altered for reuse or lost completely.

The recording team consisted of John P. White, Field Supervisor; Miles B. Battle, Roger Miller, and Jennifer I. Wimmer, architects; Terra Klugh, Historian; and Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer).

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*Catherine C. Lavoie is a HABS historian.*

Richard O'Connor

## United States Pipe and Foundry Company

As part of its documentation of the Birmingham iron industry, the Historic American Engineering Record prepared drawings, photographs, and a history of the cast iron pipe manufacturing process, focusing on the Bessemer plant of the United States Pipe and Foundry Company. Reflecting concerns sparked by rapid urban development and issues of personal hygiene and disease control, cities in the early-20th century turned to cast iron pipe to provide large quantities of drinking water to their rapidly growing populations. Much of that pipe was supplied by firms in the Birmingham, Alabama industrial area, and the Bessemer plant of the United States Pipe Company was one of the largest.

Founded in 1888 as the Howard-Harrison Iron Company and subsumed by the United States Cast Iron Pipe and Foundry Company in 1899, the Bessemer facility has been the site of two generations of pipe-making technology. Until the 1920s, the plant made pipe by the pit-cast method, in which iron was cast into vertical molds in sand pits in the factory floor. In 1921, United States Pipe purchased exclusive U.S. rights to the deLavaud process, in which cast iron was spun into molds spinning at high velocity. Since that time, deLavaud-process centrifugally-cast pipe has dominated the market, in diameters ranging from 4” to 60”.

The Bessemer plant is housed in the original buildings of the Howard-Harrison Iron Company. In addition to the large selection of deLavaud machinery, cupolas, and proprietary mixing, desulfuring

and gray-to-ductile iron conversion processes, the plant exhibits an array of artifacts of the pit-cast process, including anchors in ceiling trusses for the massive jib-cranes used to move castings and a “gung-ho” alley for running molten iron to the pits.

The recording team consisted of Robert Dixon, Mark Slater, William Brooks, Eric Elmer, and Aynur Oretmen(US/ICOMOS). Richard O’Connor prepared the history and Jet Lowe prepared large-format photographs.

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*Richard O’Connor is a HAER historian.*

Tim Davis

## New Exhibition

**M**illions of motorists visit the national parks every year, but few pause to consider when, how, or why the roads they travel on were built. The NPS Historic American Engineering Record, the National Building Museum, and the Federal Highway Administration are working together to tell this story in an exhibition titled *Lying Lightly on the Land*, which will take place at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, from June 1997 to January 1998. This exhibition will trace the development of America’s national park roads and parkways from the earliest days of Yellowstone and Yosemite to the present. Using historic photographs and films, vintage vehicles, antique camping and construction equipment, and a wide variety of plans, drawings, and tourist material, this exhibition will show how park roads were designed and constructed, trace their evolution in response to ever-increasing park attendance, and demonstrate how the history of park roads reflects changing cultural concerns, social conditions, and technological possibilities. *Lying Lightly on the Land* is an outgrowth of HAER’s on-going efforts to document America’s national park roads and parkways, a multi-year project funded by the Federal Lands Highway Program of the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. For more information, contact the National Building Museum at 202-272-2448.

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*Tim Davis is a historian with the Historic American Engineering Record, NPS.*

Brian Carey

## Color Images at HABS/HAER

**T**here is a new look to the architectural and engineering collections of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER)—it’s color. During the summer of 1995, Collections Management historian Elizabeth Jandoli began the sizable task of assessing and preparing for transmittal to the Library of Congress the approximate 2,000 color transparencies stored in HABS/HAER’s Washington office.

Color transparencies may be best understood as large slides (standard HABS/HAER format sizes being 4x5 inches and 5x7 inches). Color transparencies are positive images, not negatives, and are processed on Ektachrome large format color film.

Early in the 1970s, HABS and HAER photographers began shooting color transparencies in instances where color photography would enhance the recorded knowledge of historic structures and sites. As the number of transparencies grew, so did the demand for their access and use. Concern for their archival stability led HABS/HAER and Library of Congress staff to develop means by which these color images could be incorporated into the formal HABS/HAER Collections which, until then, had wholly consisted of measured drawings, black-and-white photographs, and written histories.

At the time of this printing, progress has been steady with more than 1,100 color transparencies transmitted, processed, and made available to the general public and researchers at the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Most importantly, these images will certainly enjoy extended life being housed in the most advanced archival storage facilities as well as infinitely greater public circulation being serviced by the Library’s professional staff. As a direct result, a large number of current HABS/HAER recording projects have a color component. This number will only increase in the future.

For information on the availability of color transparencies for a specific structure or site, contact the Prints and Photographs Division, 202-707-6394. To learn more about this project, contact Monica Murphy, HABS/HAER historian, 202-343-9598.

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*Brian L. Cary is a HABS/HAER architect.*